



Miami Art Museum

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MAM PRESENTS MAJOR EXHIBITION BY CUBAN-BORN ARTIST  
ANA MENDIETA



*Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985*  
Oct. 2, 2005 – January 15, 2006

Miami Art Museum presents the most comprehensive survey to date of over 100 works by Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) drawn from private and public collections in the US and Europe. *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985*, organized by the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. and curated by the Hirshhorn's director Olga Viso, will be presented at MAM from Oct. 2, 2005 through Jan. 15, 2006. In Miami, the exhibition is coordinated by Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator Lorie Mertes and Research Assistant Rene Morales.

"For decades, the life and art of Ana Mendieta have been a frequent source of intrigue and speculation as considerable debate about her untimely death has dominated public and critical discussion. As a result, the richness and complexity of her art, as well as its important legacy to contemporary culture, have not been fully acknowledged," said Viso. "This exhibition shifts the focus to Mendieta's life and significant production as an artist, placing her work in a broad international context as well as the social and artistic fabric of the 1970s and 1980s."

Born in 1948 in Havana, Mendieta fled Castro's revolution as a 12-year-old and came to the United States in 1961 without her parents. Her personal and professional development was greatly informed by the painful experience of exile as well as the cross-fertilization of Caribbean and North American cultures. In 1980, she returned to the island of her birth, 18 years after her traumatic exile as an adolescent. Over the next three years, Mendieta made seven visits to Cuba, developing strong ties with a community of emerging artists and immersing herself in the island's rich Afro-Cuban traditions.

Mendieta said of her work, "'I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this to be a direct result of my having been torn away from my homeland during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source."

Mendieta emerged as an artist in the 1970s, a decade of significant artistic experimentation in which "body art" (also called "performance art") became a primary mode of expression for artists

who worked across media and used film and video to document ephemeral actions in the gallery, on the street, or in the landscape. Contributing to the development of performance art and land art (also called earthworks), Mendieta described her actions in which she inserted her naked figure (or its outline or contours) in nature as “earth body works.” Mendieta’s actions are presented in the exhibition in film, slides, photographs and residual performance objects, as well as independent drawings and sculptures made at the end of her career.

For Miami, Ana Mendieta’s work poignantly addresses issues of identity for an exile community through photographs, sculptures, and performances, reflecting the artist’s desire to reconnect with her Cuban roots. Recognizing the artist’s significance to Miami and to MAM’s overall mission, Miami Art Museum has long been committed to broadening public understanding of Ana Mendieta’s work and securing her place in art history. In 1996, the year MAM was first established, the museum acquired 12 photographs from the artist’s *Siluetas Works in Mexico* series that have since been exhibited in a number of exhibitions drawn from its permanent collection.

“Presenting a one-person exhibition of Mendieta’s art has been a top institutional priority since MAM was established,” said MAM Director Suzanne Delehanty. When it became possible for MAM to participate in the national tour of the Mendieta show, we committed to the project immediately. Her work has a special resonance for our community and we are especially pleased to be the final stop on the tour of this groundbreaking exhibition.”

Ana Mendieta’s personal ties to Miami are strong. She made a number of trips to the city in the early 1980s, creating an ephemeral “earth-body” sculpture at Crandon Park beach in Key Biscayne in 1981, as part of her exhibition in *Latin American Art: A Woman’s View* at the Frances Wolfson Gallery of Miami-Dade College. In 1982, the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami gave Mendieta one of her earliest solo exhibitions. It consisted of a group of outdoor sculptures from natural materials indigenous to South Florida. Other traces of her time here are evident in works found in private collections as well as on the 50-foot sacred Ceiba tree in Cuban Memorial Boulevard in Little Havana. One can still see the outline where the artist etched her silhouette there twenty-one years ago.

Rooted both in nature and in the body, Mendieta's art was influenced by issues of personal identity and femininity, and distinguished by the singular hybrid form she often created. Critical of the exclusion of artists of diverse races and ethnicities from the art world, she also vehemently asserted her own transcultural identity. Borrowing freely from a variety of cultural traditions throughout the world, Mendieta frequently appropriated symbols and aspects of the ritual practices of ancient and indigenous cultures of the Americas, Africa and Europe. While denying all forms of boundaries, Mendieta's cipher is the naked female form. Whether performing in the studio, merging with the landscape, etched on a leaf or burned into the soil, it remained at the center of her artistic production.

Deeply influenced by her personal experience, Mendieta's art nevertheless reveals a passionate desire to connect with a wider, collective human heritage. She sought to unravel the collective layers of individual and societal history and unmask the latent ethnic, cultural and gender biases in society, thereby fostering greater self-awareness and comprehension of the complex diversity of humanity. It is for this reason that her humble yet prolific production as an artist continues to be relevant today. The meaning of her work has particular resonance in a global society struggling to grasp the overwhelming points of correspondence and difference between individuals, nations and cultures.

Although Ana Mendieta died while still struggling to establish her career, her contribution to the art of our time is significant. Her fusion of media, synthesis of sculpture and performance, and her embrace of transcultural identity as vital subject matter in her art, left a rich artistic legacy that has influenced subsequent generations of artists.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 288-page catalogue co-published by the Hirshhorn and Hatje Cantz Verlag in Germany, and distributed by Distributed Art Publishers in New York. The publication is the most definitive monograph produced to date on the work of Ana Mendieta and contains biographical, analytical and interpretive essays by Olga Viso, curator of the exhibition; Chrissie Iles, curator of contemporary art, Whitney Museum of American Art; art historian Julia Herzberg; and art critic Guy Brett. Additionally, art historian Laura Roulet contributed an extensive chronology of the artist's life and career.

*Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985* is made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation; the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Bruce T. Halle Family Foundation; and The Judith Rothschild Foundation. Initial research was supported by Craig Robins and a Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Getty Grant Program. Additional support for the exhibition catalog was made possible through the generosity of Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz and Isabel and Ricardo Ernst.

In Miami, the exhibition is additionally supported by **MAM'S ANNUAL EXHIBITION FUND:**  
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### Related Programs at MAM

#### Friday September 30

7 – 8pm

César Trasobares, a collector of Mendieta's work and lender to the exhibition, presents an informal talk on Mendieta's *Ceiba Fetish* at the ceiba tree at Cuban Memorial Park on 13th Avenue and 8th Street. The talk is held in conjunction with *Viernes Culturales/Cultural Fridays* held from 7pm to 11pm throughout Calle Ocho between 14th and 17th Avenues.

#### Saturday October 1

7 - 9pm

Exhibition viewing, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and live music

MAM members free; non-members \$10

#### Sunday October 2

3 – 4pm

##### **Mendieta's Global Perspective**

Exhibition curator Olga Viso, Director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC and curator of the exhibition, discusses the artist's career-long fascination with ancient and indigenous cultures throughout the world, including those from Africa, the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, and Europe. The artist's extensive travels to Mexico, Cuba, and ancient sites in Europe and Asia, including Malta, Newgrange, Ireland, and Egypt will be considered.

MAM members \$5; non-members \$10

Space is limited, reservations recommended. To RSVP contact [MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov](mailto:MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov) or call 305.375.1704

**Sunday November 6**

2pm

Candle lighting of *Ñaño Burial* followed by a gallery talk presented by Mendieta collector and lender to the exhibition, Peter Menéndez

Sundays are Free at MAM sponsored by *The Miami Herald/ El Nuevo Herald*

**Friday November 18**

10am – 5pm

Museum admission is free on this day in honor of Ana Mendieta's birthday.

**Sunday January 15**

2pm

Candle lighting of *Ñaño Burial* followed by gallery talk by Mendieta collector and lender to the exhibition, Juan Lezcano

Sundays are Free at MAM sponsored by *The Miami Herald/ El Nuevo Herald*

**Sundays at 2pm**

Guided tours of the exhibition.

Sundays are Free at MAM sponsored by *The Miami Herald/ El Nuevo Herald*

Guided tours for adults in English and Spanish by appointment.

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Open Tuesday through Friday - 10 AM to 5 PM, Saturday and Sunday – noon to 5 PM. Third Thursdays until 8:30 PM. Closed Monday. Admission for MAM members, children under 12 and students (with valid ID) is free. Adults \$5, seniors \$2.50. Free admission every Sunday and second Saturdays.

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[miamiartmuseum.org](http://miamiartmuseum.org)

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